

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An image forming apparatus comprising:

n independently driven light sources;

a scanner unit adapted to cause n light beams from said n light sources to perform scanning on a photosensitive member in a main scanning direction;

a moving unit adapted to cause the n light beams to perform scanning in a sub-scanning direction by moving said photosensitive member;

a control unit for controlling said scanner unit and/or said moving unit so that a main scanning line on the photosensitive member is subjected to overlapped exposure k times by different light beams, said control unit having at least a first mode in which k is set to k₁, and a second mode in which k is set to k₂ ($\neq k_1$), wherein $n = i_1 \times k_1 = i_2 \times k_2$, i₁ and i₂ are natural numbers, and k₁ and k₂ are natural numbers equal to or larger than 2; and

a modulator for modulating the respective light beams so that dot strings formed by the light beams are shifted by a distance of d/k in the main scanning direction, where d is an interval between dots formed by each light beam.

2. An image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a beam detector adapted to detect a light beam caused to perform scanning by said scanner unit, wherein said modulator modulates the respective light beams so that the dot strings formed by the light beams are shifted by the distance of d/k in the main scanning direction, based on a

detection signal from said beam detector.

3. An image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said apparatus variably controls a dot system by the light beam.

4. An image forming apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the light beam is a laser beam.